HANNA-BARBERA UNIVERSE

# FUTURE QUEST PRESENTS

VOLUME 1

"If you were a fan of these old Hanna-Barbera cartoons, FUTURE QUEST will please you to no end." **NERDIST**

**JEFF PARKER**
**PHIL HESTER**
**STEVE RUDE**
**ARIEL OLIVETTI**

# FUTURE QUEST PRESENTS

## VOL. 1

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THE RAIDER TOOK OUR WHOLE SUPPLY OF ZESIUM!

THE STATION WILL LOSE GRAVITY IN HOURS WITHOUT IT!

HOW EASY WAS *THAT*, CREW?!

WHEN WE'RE AT THE STRONGHOLD I'LL CONTACT THEM AND KINDLY OFFER TO SELL IT BACK AT A TENFOLD MARKUP.

AND STILL THE LEGEND OF ***ROXTAR*** GROWS ACROSS THE SECTOR!

BBAAMMMM

STARBOARD SIDE IMPACT!

WE'RE OUT OF RANGE OF THE STATION! DO THEY HAVE MISSILES NOW?

OR AN ASTERO--

SPACE GHOST!

# THE QUEST REBORN!


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A LARGER WORLD STUDIO – LETTERERS

ARIEL OLIVETTI – MAIN COVER ARTIST

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BRING THE TORCH RAY AROUND!

IN SIGHTS, SIR!

PUT ALL RESERVES INTO IT!

WE PUT A HOLE IN THE WING!

IT DOESN'T MATTER--IT WAS WORTH THE DAMAGE!

I HAVE ANNIHILATED SPACE GHOST!

I KNEW IT WAS LEGEND, EXAGGERATION!

EVERYONE MADE HIM SOUND UNSTOPPABLE, LIKE A TRUE SPIRIT!

NOW THE LEGEND OF **ROXTAR** WILL GROW EVEN MORE!

R-- ROXT--

KZOOSH

VAMMM

AAH!!

**NOO!!!** THE VACUUM IS TOO STRONG--

AHH... BLORST.

WHAM

EMERGENCY SHIELD UP!

GOOD.

NOW TURN THIS SHIP AROUND SO THIS STOLEN CARGO CAN BE PUT BACK WHERE IT BELONGS.

AYE AYE, SPACE GHOST.

AND MAKE IT FAST.

SCHOOL'S ABOUT TO LET OUT.

NEXT WE FIND OURSELVES ON THE SPECTACULAR ***PLANET AMZOT,*** HOME TO THE MOST UNIQUE CREATURES IN THE VORANOVA STAR SYSTEM!

MUCH OF THIS EXTREME BIODIVERSITY IS DUE TO THE HIGH LEVELS OF ***ORGANITE*** IN THE SOIL, KNOWN INFORMALLY AS *"THE LIVING MINERAL."*

GRAH!

THERE YOU SEE ONE CREATURE COMPLETELY COMPOSED OF ORGANITE.

GOOD WORK, HERCULOIDS!

IS THE ROBOT COMPLETELY DESTROYED?

STAY BACK, DORNO!

THERE ARE HUMANOIDS ON AMZOT, BUT THEY ARE NON-NATIVE. A MERE FEW THOUSAND ARE SPREAD AROUND THE PLANET, ALL REFUGEES FROM THEIR POINT OF ORIGIN...

...AMZOT'S SISTER PLANET, *QUASAR.*

QUASAR RECENTLY REACHED THE LEVEL OF DEVELOPMENT KNOWN AS ***SINGULARITY,*** WHEN CONSTRUCTED MECHANICAL INTELLIGENCE ACHIEVES SENTIENCE.

WHILE THIS USUALLY TRANSPIRES PEACEFULLY THROUGHOUT OUR GALAXY...

...THAT WAS NOT THE CASE ON QUASAR. BEFORE, WE WOULD HAVE ORGANIZED A FIELD TRIP FOR YOU ALL TO VISIT THAT PEACEFUL WORLD.

NOW IT CAN ONLY BE VISITED HOLOGRAPHICALLY AND IS QUARANTINED FROM THE REST OF OUR SOLAR SYSTEM.

TUTOR RACHI, DO YOU THINK IF THE SPACE FORCE HAD STILL EXISTED--

--THEY COULD HAVE SAVED THE QUASARIANS?

SLOR, I DON'T LIKE TO SPECULATE ON ALTERNATE HISTORIES.

BUT YES, I THINK THEY WOULD HAVE MADE A DIFFERENCE.

AT ITS HEIGHT, THE SPACE FORCE HAD MULTIPLE PROTECTORS ON EACH WORLD OF OUR SYSTEM AND ONE ON EVERY INHABITED WORLD IN THIS SECTOR.

OF COURSE THAT HISTORY ENDS AS WE TALK ABOUT THE NEXT PLANET IN CENTRAL ORBIT.

***VORANOVA,*** THE NAMESAKE OF OUR SOLAR SYSTEM AND ORIGIN POINT OF MOST HUMANOID LIFE HERE.

THE WORLD WAS LAID WASTE BY THE GALACTIC SCOURGE CALLED ***OMNIKRON,*** AND THE SPACE FORCE WAS ANNIHILATED HERE.

AS WE KNOW, THE CREATURE WAS EVENTUALLY CHASED TO A DISTANT WORLD CALLED ***EARTH*** WHERE IT WAS DESTROYED AT LAST.

SURVIVORS EVACUATED TO COLONIZE OTHER WORLDS, LEAVING VORANOVA A LIFELESS GHOST PLANET.

I HEARD THAT'S WHERE ***SPACE GHOST*** LIVES!

AND THAT ***HE'S*** THE ONLY ONE OF THE ***SPACE FORCE*** TO SURVIVE--

YES, SLEO, WE'VE ALL HEARD THESE LEGENDS, THANK YOU.

IT'S DIFFICULT TO CONFIRM AS SPACE GHOST DOESN'T ACCEPT INTERVIEWS, BUT HE HAS BEEN A GREAT HELP IN OUR MUCH MORE CHAOTIC SECTOR.

HOPEFULLY THESE LOCAL SYSTEM STUDIES WILL HELP US ALL ONE DAY RESTORE THE PEACE AND SAFETY.

PERFECT TIMING.

PLEASE MAKE SURE TO SLEEP-WAVE CHAPTER THREE ON KOLUS' ICE MOONS OVER YOUR BREAK.

I WORRIED ONE OF THE CLASS WAS GOING TO MENTION SPACE GHOST'S YOUNG ASSISTANTS.

ME TOO! I WANTED TO SAY *"HE'S TRAINING THE NEW SPACE FORCE!"*

AND WE'RE ***IT.***

RACHI WOULD KEEP THEM FROM ASKING ABOUT US-- SHE'S ALWAYS PRESENTED US AS ASTEROID MINERS' KIDS.

BUT IT WOULD BE FUN FOR ONCE TO TELL THE CLASS ABOUT OUR MISSIONS.

AND BLIP WOULD TAKE ALL THE CREDIT.

WEEK-EEEK!

WOO KOOK OOK?

IMAGINE IF THEY KNEW THAT WE'D ACTUALLY BEEN ON EARTH, FIGHTING OMNIKRON!

BUT SPACE GHOST IS RIGHT. IF WE WANT TO KEEP PEOPLE SAFE, NO ONE CAN KNOW WE WORK FOR HIM.

ENEMIES WOULD ATTACK THE SCHOOL BASE.

KI-KAH-KOO!

BLIP, WILL YOU LET THE ***AUTOPILOT*** DRIVE? YOU'RE MAKING ME ***DIZZY!***

WOOK OOK OOOOOOH!

AH, COME ON, I DON'T WANT TO GET SAD RIGHT NOW.

I CAN'T HELP IT, I WAS JUST THINKING OF THEM.

I THINK THEY'D BE PROUD OF US-- I HOPE.

THEY'D BE *TERRIFIED* IF THEY KNEW ALL THE DANGER WE FACE NOW.

BUT AFTER THE DISASTER THAT TOOK THEM...AND NEARLY US...

I KNOW. I DON'T SCARE EASILY ANYMORE EITHER.

IT'S NOT A TYPICAL LIFE, BUT IT'S ALWAYS INTERESTING, ISN'T IT, BLIP?

IT'S FUNNY HEARING HOW THE OTHER KIDS TALK ABOUT SPACE GHOST. LIKE HE'S NOT EVEN A REAL BEING.

I GUESS THAT'S THE WAY HE WANTS TO BE SEEN.

AN AVENGING SPIRIT.

"INSTEAD OF A LONE MAN WHO ONCE LOST EVERYTHING."

DELIVERY FOR GRAL!

WHAT TIME DOES THE GENERAL RETURN?

REACTOR RUNNING SMOOTHLY...

DRAK'S RAIDERS ARE *OUT OF BUSINESS.*

DID YOU HEAR ABOUT THE CADETS *DRAK* CAPTURED?

CAPTAIN KYR *DESTROYED* HIS LAB AND *RESCUED* THEM!

SPEAK OF THE DEVLOR-- GOOD WORK, KYR!

THANKS, WOR.

I JUST HOPE THOSE THREE WILL BE OKAY. IT'S GOOD TO BE BACK.

WHAT WAS THAT S.O.S., JOGAS?

A CRASH LANDING IN THE OUTER SYSTEM.

I SENT AUTO TO CHECK IT OUT.

--SO I SAID, THAT'S NOT MY ZONE, SIR!

NO WAY I WAS GETTING IN THE MIDDLE OF THAT...

WELCOME BACK, KYR.

WILL YOU BE AT THE CEREMONY TONIGHT?

I HADN'T PLANNED ON IT BUT...

THERE'S AN EXTRA SEAT AT MY TABLE...

SPACE GHOST!

WE HEARD ON THE NEWS WAVE THAT YOU CAUGHT ROXTAR!

THANKS, JACE.

BUT IT'S NOT ENOUGH. LOOK.

WHILE I WAS DEALING WITH THE SPACE STATION ATTACK, ***CREATURE KING*** STRUCK A COLONY ON ONE OF CYGNON'S MOONS.

I'VE TRIED HELPING THE WORLDS OF THIS SECTOR BUILD THEIR DEFENSES, BUT MORE WARLORDS AND MARAUDERS SURFACE EVERY DAY.

YUCK.

DO YOU WANT US TO QUIT SCHOOL AND GO AHEAD AND BECOME SPACE FORCE OFFICERS?

YOU KNOW HE NEVER GOES FOR THAT.

A POWER-BAND MAKES ONE'S BODY A CONDUIT FOR ALL AMBIENT ENERGY.

IT'S TOO ERRATIC UNTIL THE HOST IS FULLY GROWN. PLUS...

...IT DEMANDS A LEVEL OF FOCUS THAT TEENS AREN'T KNOWN FOR.

HEY!

ONLY THREE REMAIN. WE ONCE HAD THREE HUNDRED.

IT'S TIME TO CHANGE THAT.

BUT YOU SAID THERE'S NO MORE OF THE RARE ELEMENT THE BANDS USE.

NO MORE THAT'S BEEN BROUGHT TO THE SURFACE, BUT THERE'S STILL MORE UNDERGROUND.

WHERE?

PLANET *AMZOT.*

READY THE PHANTOM CRUISER!

THERE! SEE WHERE I'M POINTING?

TRY TO HIT THE TOP OF IT SO IT FALLS FREE. READY... AIM...

...FIRE!

PCHOO

HRRNK!

FOOM

YOU HIT IT! GOOD TUNDRO!

YOU'VE REALLY HONED TUNDRO'S AIM, DORNO!

BUT TAKE A BREAK FROM COLLECTING FRUIT. THIS WILL ALL SPOIL BEFORE WE CAN EAT IT.

AND WE HAVE VISITORS.

IT IS GREAT TO SEE OUR FRIENDS AGAIN UNDER HAPPIER CIRCUMSTANCE.

UNLESS IT'S NOT HAPPY-- YOU'RE NOT HERE BECAUSE AMZOT IS ABOUT TO BE ATTACKED AGAIN, ARE YOU?

NO, I'M SEARCHING FOR AN ELEMENT THAT WAS ONCE FOUND HERE.

HAVE YOU HEARD A PLACE CALLED THE VOKMAR CAVERN?

SOUNDS LIKE AN ADVENTURE, *HERCULOIDS!*

YES, ABOUT A HUNDRED KRUDI FROM HERE.

I SHOULD SAY, IT'S ONE OF THE MOST DANGEROUS REGIONS ON AMZOT.

AS I EXPECTED.

THE SPACE FORCE RELIED ON A SMALL TEAM OF GEOLOGISTS AND MINERS TO RETRIEVE THE ORE THAT CONTAINED ELEMENT ZEO.

THE FORCE WOULD PROTECT THE TEAM FROM THE WILDLIFE WHILE THEY WORKED.

I HEARD ABOUT THIS.

MANY CREATURES TREAT THAT AREA AS TERRITORY... AND CONVERGED ON THE PARTY.

THE SPACE FORCE AGENTS SURVIVED, BUT THE WORKERS WERE NEVER FOUND.

WHY WAS ANOTHER TEAM NEVER SENT?

THAT WAS WHEN OMNIKRON FIRST APPEARED IN OUR SECTOR, SO THERE WAS NEVER TIME TO FOLLOW UP.

YOW!!!

BAD GLEEP!

A ROBOT SPY!

DON'T LET IT GET--

--AWAY.

CRUNCH

THE HERCULOIDS ARE THE PRIME DEFENDERS OF THIS WORLD. THE A.I. OF QUASAR ARE ALWAYS TRYING TO FIND WEAK POINTS.

ONE DAY WHEN WE HAVE A FULL SPACE FORCE AGAIN, QUASAR WILL BE DEALT WITH.

BUT I WONDER IF I MIGHT RECRUIT A TEMPORARY MEMBER FOR THE JOURNEY TOMORROW.

GU-RAH?

INCOMING!

ZOK MUST HAVE STRONG WINGS.

THE HERCULOIDS' ABILITIES COMPLEMENT EACH OTHER PERFECTLY. THEY WORK TOGETHER LIKE A WELL-OILED MACHINE.

*DON'T TELL THEM I DESCRIBED THEM THAT WAY.*

HEE-HEEK?

I WISH ZANDOR AND I COULD GO WITH YOU, BUT THE RADIATION BELOW MAKES IT IMPOSSIBLE FOR ANY OF US EXCEPT IGOO.

YOU COULD WEAR ONE OF OUR SUITS. IT PROTECTS COMPLETELY!

WE HAVE FORSWORN ALL COMPUTER TECHNOLOGY, OR NOTHING WOULD STOP ME.

OF COURSE. PARDON ME, TARRA.

HEEEK!

LOOK OUT!

THOSE ARE FLOWER-EATERS. THE BEASTS YOU HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT RESIDE WITHIN.

ZOK AND I WILL CAMP UP HERE AND GUARD YOUR SHIP.

THANK YOU.

WE *WILL* RETURN.

ELEMENT ZEO REACTS, AS IF MORE OF IT IS SUDDENLY NEAR.

WE KNEW THIS DAY WOULD COME.

SOMEONE WANTS TO MAKE MORE WEAPONS FOR THE MIGHTY SPACE FORCE.

TODAY THEY WILL KNOW THE VENGEANCE OF METALLUS.

THE GOSLOG CAVERN, PLANET AMZOT.

GRUNNA TUK LA.

EEEK!

IGOO, I WISH I UNDERSTOOD YOUR LANGUAGE AS WELL AS ZANDOR.

I THINK HE'S SAYING HOW SPOOKY THIS CAVERN IS.

I'M HAVING A HARD TIME IMAGINING SOMETHING SPOOKING A HERCULOID.

# THE BURIED PAST

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WHAT INCREDIBLE TROGLO-FAUNA.

WE DON'T EVEN NEED THE LIGHT ORB OVER HERE WITH THIS BIOLUMINESCENCE.

OR MAYBE IT GLOWS BECAUSE IT'S SO RADIOACTIVE.

IF IT WOULDN'T GIVE AWAY THAT WE'RE SPACE FORCE RECRUITS--

--WE COULD SHARE IMAGES OF ALL THIS WITH OUR CLASS.

JACE, NOT TOO CLOSE...

AH!!

SLRRRP

JACE!

IGOO, GRAB THE ONE JACE IS IN BEFORE HE GETS PULLED INTO THE DIGESTIVE TRACT!

KRAH BRAH!

THANKS, IGOO!

STAY STILL, JACE!

I'LL TORCH-BEAM A WAY OUT FOR YOU. WAIT UNTIL THE OPENING IS BIG ENOUGH.

HSSWSSSSSS

THANKS!

SORRY, TEAM, I'LL PLAY IT SAFER HERE ON IN.

I'M ALWAYS NEEDING A RESCUE.

OH, I KNOW HOW THAT FEELS.

OOK WOOK.

DON'T BE DISCOURAGED, KIDS.

LOOK.

THAT'S ONE OF THE ORE TRANSPORTS THE RETRIEVAL TEAM WAS USING TO BRING OUT ELEMENT ZEO.

THAT WAS A WHOLE TEAM OF ADULTS WITH SPACE FORCE OFFICERS GUARDING THEM.

NONE MADE IT OUT.

THE SPACE FORCE WOULD NEVER HAVE BROUGHT RECRUITS AS YOUNG AS YOU INTO A PLACE THIS DANGEROUS.

BUT I CAN'T THINK OF ANY OTHER WAY TO TRAIN YOU...

...FOR THE DANGERS THAT LIE AHEAD.

HEY! THERE'S--OH, IT'S MY REFLECTION...?

WHAT IS THAT?

CRYSTALS! I REMEMBER HEARING ABOUT THIS SECTION.

THIS IS WHERE MANY PEOPLE GOT DISORIENTED.

I CAN SEE WHY-- IT'S HARD TO TELL WHICH WAY IS FORWARD!

GRAH?

STAY CLOSE TO ME, I CAN NAVIGATE BY SONAR--

WEEKEEK EEK EEEK!!!

WHAT IS IT, BLIP?

SREEEE-KAAAA!!

TAKE COVER!

WHRAAH!

SSVVSVSSSHH

OOK-RAH!!!

ZZAASSHH

IT PACKS A REAL PUNCH!

STAY UNDER COVER, KIDS, I'M ABOUT TO FIRE!

WHAVVOOOOO

VVVOOOOOOMM

HNH--!

IT REFLECTED HIS Z-ENERGY LIKE LIGHT!

NOT GOOD.

KRAM

BRAHR!

WHY'S IT FIRING THE WRONG WAY?

VSHWWSSHH

MAYBE IGOO DAZED IT!

KVOOOM

KVOOOOM

RHARNK!

UNGH!

SPACE GHOST!

THAT CREATURE KNOWS EVERY FACET OF THIS ENVIRONMENT--

--IT CAN HIT US FROM ANY ANGLE. I NEED BLIP TO TAKE IGOO A MESSAGE.

SWEEK!

KBAM

BARAK CHA!

SUWEEK-EEK-OOK EEK!

UNGA TRAH? BU-LIP?

WEE WEE WEEKA KEE, LAKA TAK MIK!

NNN... GUTTA DAHK.

HRRRRRRRHHHHH...

CLICK CLICK

NO WAY TO DO THIS BUT HANDS-ON.

GHRRRR...

NOW, IGOO!

DON'T WORRY ABOUT ME, I'LL KEEP MY FORCE FIELD UP!

UUUU

LATER...

WHOA, IGOO, STOP!

I CAN'T GET A READING ON HOW DEEP IT IS--IT COULD GO TO THE PLANET'S CORE!

THERE WAS A NATURAL LAND PASSAGE HERE-- LOOK AT THESE SCORCHED SECTIONS.

SOMEONE BLASTED IT... DESTROYED THE BRIDGE.

NO, IGOO. IF YOU DIDN'T REACH THE OTHER SIDE, YOU COULD FALL FOREVER.

UN-GAH?

STAY HERE AND LET US CONTINUE.

KEEWEE TEEKEE, GI-GOO!

HAAHRRUM.

BEFORE, I WONDERED WHY MORE PEOPLE DIDN'T TRY TO MAKE POWER BANDS.

NOW I GET IT COMPLETELY.

WE'RE HERE. THAT SUPPORT STRUCTURE HAS TO BE WHERE THE ACTUAL MINING OPERATION WAS DONE.

NOTHING WORTH HAVING COMES EASY, JAN.

HOW MUCH ORE CAN WE CARRY OUT?

IT DOESN'T TAKE MUCH OF THE ORE TO BUILD A POWER BAND.

YEAH, I THOUGHT THAT'S WHERE IGOO WAS GOING TO BE A BIG HELP.

THE TRICK IS FINDING IT.

WHAT A STRANGE PLACE FOR A STATUE.

LOOK, THE MAN AT THE BOTTOM...

IT'S A SPACE FORCE OFFICER!

THIS IS SCARY--IS IT SOME KIND OF WARNING?

I THOUGHT IT WAS A STATUE...

...BUT THIS LOOKS LIKE YEARS OF METALLIC DUST.

HE WAS ALIVE.

HEY!

KRAK

SO STRANGE TO HEAR NEW VOICES IN THESE CAVERNS.

YOUTH, ADORNED IN THE UNIFORM OF THE SPACE FORCE.

WHAT CAN IT MEAN?

AND WHAT IS THIS ONE?

LIKE A SPECTER OF THE FORCE...AND WEARING *TWO* BANDS! I DIDN'T THINK THAT WAS POSSIBLE.

MY LOYALS, BRING THESE INTRUDERS TO THE INNER CHAMBER.

WE THOUGHT NO ONE WOULD EVER COME DOWN HERE AGAIN...

...NOW THEY MAY BE THE KEY TO OUR FREEDOM.

DISTRESS, DISTRESS!

THIS IS THE CARGO SHIP *LPXTO*, WE NEED ASSISTANCE!

A QUANTUM SINKHOLE OPENED AS WE CAME OUT OF HYPER-SPACE--

--WE'RE BEING PULLED IN!

OUR INTERLOCKS HAVE SHUT DOWN AND WE CAN'T DETACH!

JAN, JACE-- WHERE ARE YOU? CAN YOU HEAR ME?

*DAD! WE'RE IN THE CABOOSE!*

I SEE THEM! IF ONLY WE COULD GET INTO THEIR SECTION!

IT WON'T MATTER IF WE CAN'T STOP THE SINKHOLE PULLING US--

ANOTHER CAR FELL IN--IT'S NEAR THEIRS NOW!

JACE, I THINK SOMEONE HEARD THE EMERGENCY CALL!

OH WOW!

PHANTOM CRUISER, KEEP REVERSING WITH TOW BEAM ON THAT SHIP.

I'M GOING OUT.

HE SLOWED US DOWN BUT IT WON'T BE ENOUGH. WE'RE IN CRITICAL THRESHOLD UNDERTOW!

WE'RE TOO FAR IN. PLEASE-- SAVE OUR CHILDREN!

YOU CAN CUT THE CONNECTORS WITHOUT EXPOSING THE CARS TO VACUUM.

MAM, NO! NO ONE KNOWS WHAT HAPPENS INSIDE A SINKHOLE!

WE'LL BE OKAY, JAN. WE LOVE YOU!

PLEASE, SIR, FREE THEM!

BE STRONG, TWINS! YOU HAVE EACH OTHER.

ONE DAY WE'LL FIND YOU

ARE YOU STILL OUT THERE...

JACE?

I GUESS I FELL ASLEEP--

NO, WE WERE ZAPPED.

BY THE GUY WE THOUGHT WAS A STATUE.

AND HE HAS SPACE GHOST CAPTIVE, TOO.

THIS REALLY ISN'T GOING WELL.

I WANT ANSWERS!

WHY DO THE WAIFS WEAR THE UNIFORM OF THE SPACE FORCE YET YOU ARE THE ONE WIELDING THE DEADLY POWER BANDS?

I'M IMPRESSED AT WHATEVER SAFEGUARD MAKES IT IMPOSSIBLE TO REMOVE THEM...

...BUT A SMALL LENGTH OF CLIMBING CABLE KEEPS THEM OUT OF USE.

FOR THE FIRST TIME IN TWENTY CYCLES ONE OF YOU HAS RETURNED FOR THE PRECIOUS ORE TO MAKE YOUR BANDS.

DID YOU DISCOVER MORE PLANETS THAT YOU CRAVE TO CONTROL? BUT YOU'LL TAKE AWAY NO ELEMENT ZEO.

THE REALM BELOW IS NOW THE DOMAIN OF ***METALLUS.***

WE DON'T CONTROL WORLDS. WE NEED ZEO TO HELP PROTECT THEM--

***LIES.*** PROTECTING OTHERS IS THE LAST THING YOU CARE FOR.

DO YOU WANT TO HEAR A STORY? ABOUT THE BRAVE SPACE FORCE?

"YEARS AGO AN EXTRACTION TEAM DESCENDED INTO THIS CAVERN OF DEATH, FLANKED BY TWO OF YOUR OFFICERS."

I'M GETTING A READING, WE'RE NEAR A VEIN THAT HAS ELEMENT ZEO.

"THESE PROTECTORS DID THEIR JOB...UNTIL THEY REACHED THE ORE DEPOSITS."

ALL OFFICERS RETURN TO VORANOVA NOW--

--NO EXCEPTIONS!

THE SPACE FORCE NEEDS YOU!

AT ONCE, GENERAL!

WE'LL RETURN SOON!

WAIT, DON'T LEAVE US!

"YET THEY DIDN'T RETURN. AND THE DENIZENS OF THIS CAVERN KEPT COMING FOR THE MINERS AND GEOLOGISTS."

AHHH!!

MY SUIT IS COMPROMISED!

"MONTHS LATER, THE ONE OFFICER DID RETURN."

IS ANYONE HERE? THERE WAS A HORRIBLE BATTLE, NONE WERE LEFT...

...I CAME AS FAST AS I--

"PERHAPS HE WANTED TO SEE IF ANY ORE WAS CONVENIENTLY LEFT TO TAKE OUT.

"WHAT THE OFFICER FOUND WAS DEATH."

YOU WERE THE RETRIEVAL TEAM--

THE BEST IN THE SOLAR SYSTEM. CALL NOW FOR A QUOTE ON YOUR NEXT DIG!

I'M NOT SURPRISED THE SPACE FORCE NOW HIDES THEIR FACES.

*HM.* JUST ONE OF THE MYRIAD SPECIES FROM VORANOVA.

NO ONE SPECIAL.

THE FORCE WAS CALLED TO DEAL WITH THE BIGGEST THREAT IN THE GALAXY!

DON'T TALK TO ME OF THREATS, NOVAN.

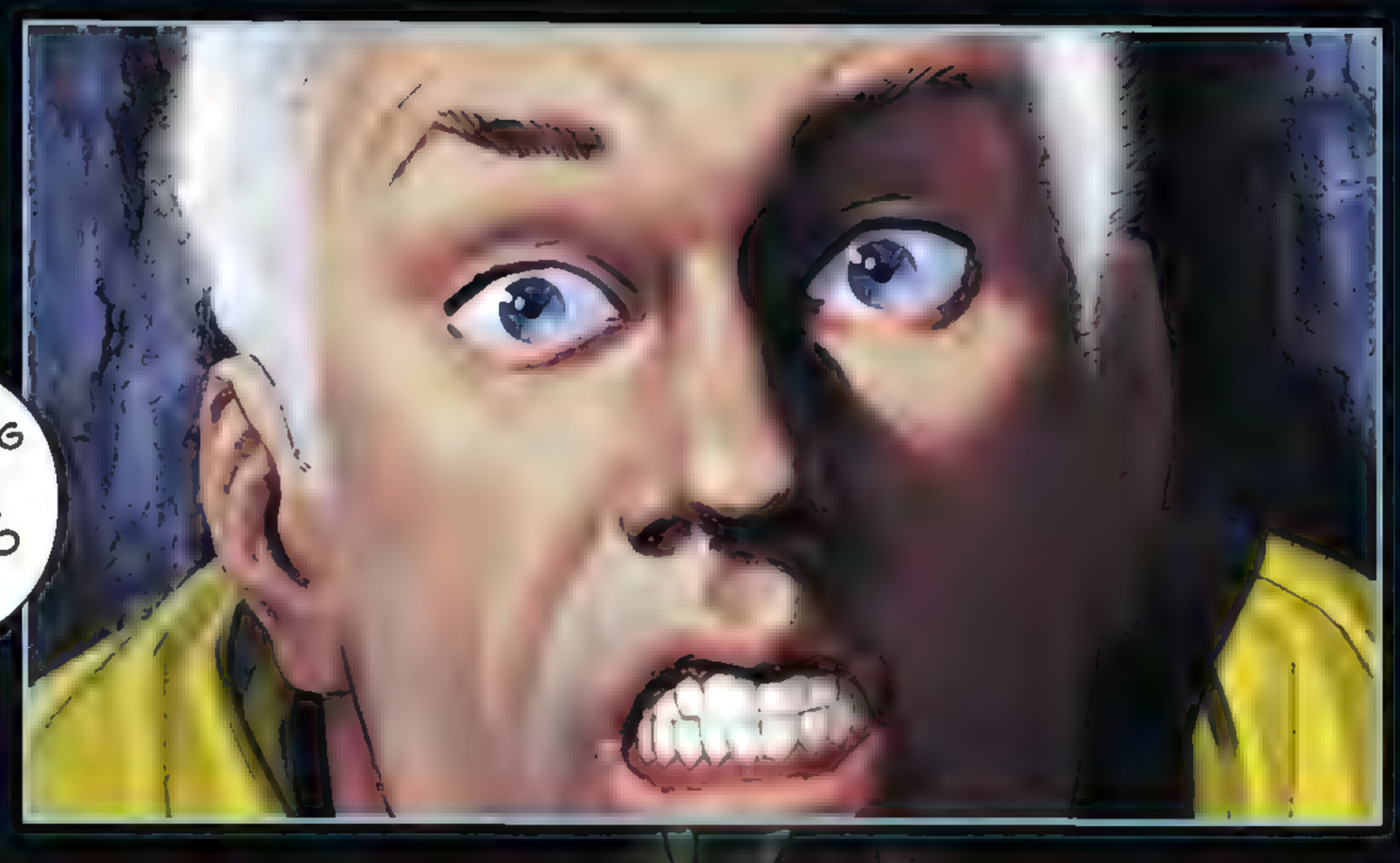
YOU WOULDN'T BELIEVE THE CREATURES THAT HUNTED US THROUGH THESE CAVERNS.

BUT IT WASN'T THE BEASTS THAT FINALLY GOT US.

IT WAS THE CONSTANT RADIATION FROM YOUR PRECIOUS ORE LEAKING THROUGH OUR SUITS.

IT'S ONLY RIGHT THAT YOU SEE ME AS WELL, OFFICER.

ELEMENT ZEO UNCONTAINED HAS VERY STRANGE PROPERTIES.


TRANSMUTING ORGANICS GRADUALLY. MATTER INTO ENERGY.
DO YOU BELIEVE IN GHOSTS, OFFICER?
WE ARE REAL.
AND WE WILL HAVE VENGEANCE ON YOU AND YOUR KIND.

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I WAS OFTEN TOLD I WAS VERY HANDSOME IN MY YOUTH.

IT'S HARD TO REMEMBER WHEN I HAD A PHYSICAL PRESENCE.

SPEAKING OF YOUTH--

--YOUR CADETS CAN JOIN US NOW.

*LEAVE THEM ALONE!*

HOW RUDE. WE'RE JUST BRINGING THEM OUT SO YOU CAN ALL BE TOGETHER.

COME OUT, LITTLE ONE... THERE YOU ARE.

I WANT YOU TO SHARE THE EXPERIENCE THAT MY TEAM AND I HAD YEARS BEFORE.

THE TROGLOSTARS GNAWING THROUGH YOUR PROTECTIVE UNIFORMS SO THE RADIATION SLOWLY CONVERTS YOU INTO *LIVING PHANTOMS.*

SHEEEK!!

ONCE IT MAKES CONTACT, IT CALLS THE OTHERS.

DON'T WORRY, THEY WON'T TAKE LONG.

*METALLUS!* IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENT AT THE CHASM!

THE BARRIER THAT KEEPS US TRAPPED.

THE GIANT ROCK APE HAS CHANGED THAT--IT CAN BE CROSSED NOW!

*IGOO DOESN'T HAVE A LOT OF PATIENCE.*

*I HOPE HE GETS HERE SOON!*

IF YOUR BODIES ARE ENERGY, WHY DID YOU STAY DOWN HERE?

YOU COULD HAVE FLOWN OUT TO FIND HELP WITH YOUR CONDITION--

*HELP.* HAHAHAHA HAA.

GO, MY LOYALS, TO THE CHASM.

I WILL JOIN YOU TO CROSS.

DO YOU KNOW WHY MY TEAM IS SO LOYAL?

WHY THEY HANG ON MY EVERY INSTRUCTION?

WHEN OUR BODIES WERE CONVERTED, MANY OF US LEFT THESE SHELLS TO DO JUST AS YOU SAID.

BUT WITHOUT OUR ARMOR AS CASING, OUR BODIES COULD NOT HOLD THEIR FORMS.

AT FIRST IT FELT LIKE TRUE FREEDOM. FLYING AROUND LIKE GODS, WITH NO BOUNDARIES.

AAAAAA!!

ELECTROMAGNETIC WAVES, SOLAR FLARES--ANYTHING COULD STRIP AWAY OUR MASS. SOME FORGOT WHO THEY WERE ENTIRELY.

OTHERS WERE SPREAD TO THE WINDS.

I MADE IT BACK FIRST AND NEVER LEFT THE SUIT SINCE. MY MIND IS THE MOST INTACT.

THE OTHERS DEPEND ON ME TO REMIND THEM THEY ARE *ALIVE AT ALL.*

THEY THINK OF YOU AS THEIR LEADER INSTEAD OF THE GEOLOGIST ADVISER.

IT'S EASIER FOR THEIR MINDS NOW. THEY ARE GRATEFUL MINIONS.

YOU'LL UNDERSTAND ALL TOO WELL SOON. HERE COME THE LIBERATORS OF YOUR PHYSICAL BONDS.

ENJOY BECOMING A TRUE *SPACE GHOST.*

AGH, IT HURTS!

HANG ON, JACE, I THINK I CAN BREAK THIS--

AH!

WHACK

YES! HURRY!

KLACK

SLASH

NOW WE HAVE A CHANCE! THANKS TO OUR SECRET WEAPON...

...BLIP!!!

GOOD WORK, LITTLE FRIEND!

DON'T WANT TO ANNIHILATE THE CAVE DWELLERS FOR FOLLOWING THEIR INSTINCTS SO I'LL DOWN-WAVE FROM PROTON AND HEAT...

...TO DEEP FREEZE.

WHRROOOOSH

THEY PUNCTURED MY UNIFORM!

MINE, TOO...

WE CAN TREAT CONTAMINATION IN THE PHANTOM CRUISER. LET'S GO.

LORD METALLUS, THE STONE SIMIAN IS APPROACHING!

IT WON'T KNOW WE KILLED ITS FRIENDS, BUT IT MAY STILL ATTACK. HOLD HERE.

IT'S USED TO THE DARK NOW-- PREPARE TO FLARE.

GUNAH-GROK TOOGA?

NOW.

WAHR-RAAAAHHH!!!

IF WE STILL HAD EYES WE'D BE AS PATHETIC AS THAT LIVING MOUNTAIN!

HAHA HAA!

THE BEAST ISN'T SO SIMPLE AFTER ALL-- A CLEVER SOLUTION TO USE A FALLEN FOE.

THE POINT THAT STOPPED US SO MANY TIMES...

...WE ARE FREE!

KWHOOM

FAREWELL TO OUR PRISON. TO THE SURFACE, METALLITES!

OUR VESSEL STILL WAITS, WITH THE ONE BAY OF ORE WE LOADED.

"ENOUGH TO DESTROY A CITY."

WARH! KAH ROO!

THERE'S IGOO-- HE LOOKS UPSET!

HE MUST HAVE RUN INTO METALLUS...IT'S THE ONLY PATH!

GUHRAAAR...

OO-KAR!!

YRHAAAH!!!

IGOO! STOP!!

BOOM

SHEEK-EEK-EEK KAWEEEE!!!

HURGH?

METALLUS MUST HAVE PULSED HIM WITH LIGHT-- HE COULDN'T TELL WHO WE WERE.

THAT'S TWICE TODAY BLIP HAS SAVED US--GOOD MONKEY!

JUST FOLLOW OUR VOICES UNTIL YOUR SIGHT RETURNS, IGOO.

KUNA KA DOH.

WOW, LOOK WHAT A GREAT SOLUTION IGOO CAME UP WITH!

HA HA!

WHEN MINING RESUMES, THIS WILL BE KNOWN AS IGOO'S CROSSING.

NOW. LET'S STOP METALLUS.

ZANDOR! TARRA!

THOSE ROBOTS ARE GETTING AWAY!

TARRA! DID THOSE BEINGS ATTACK YOU?

YES, BUT THEN THEY WENT IN THAT SHIP--WE NEVER KNEW IT WAS THERE!

THEY'RE TOO DANGEROUS TO BE AT LARGE--

THEY DIDN'T ALL MAKE IT ON BOARD!

GLEEP AND GLOOP MANAGED TO CATCH ONE!

GULP

WHERE IS METALLUS GOING? *ANSWER!*

TO DESTROY THE SPACE FORCE! TO *VORANOVA!*

THE SHIP HAS ORE, IT CAN BE ENERGIZED TO DESTROY THE CAPITAL CITY!

IT IS OUR DUTY TO METALLUS. I HAVE TO BE WITH HIM!

*WHAT!*

STOP, YOU CAN'T HOLD YOUR FORM OUTSIDE THE ARMOR!

METALLUS, WAIT FOR ME!

I AM YOUR CAPTAIN!

I AM... I AM...

...I CAN'T REMEMBER MY NAME...

...WHERE I'M FROM...

...I...

JAN, JACE! INTO THE PHANTOM CRUISER, QUICK.

METALLUS, WE ARE CLOSING IN ON VORANOVA!

YES, I SEE HER. IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME.

I THINK MOST OF YOU ARE FROM THE OUTER SYSTEM... I USED TO LIVE HERE.

I'LL SHOW YOU WHAT WE'RE GOING TO CHANGE.

THE GLEAMING SPIRES OF VORANOVA, PRIDE OF THE GALAXY.

AND IN THE CENTER OF THE MAIN CITY, THE HOME STATION OF THE SPACE FORCE.

NOW ENTERING ATMOSPHERE RANGE ON COURSE.

WE'LL DROP THE CARGO POD RIGHT ON SPACE FORCE'S BASE AND IGNITE IT WITH THE METEOR SMASHER!

STRANGE, THE HULL SHOULD BE RISING IN TEMPERATURE FROM ENTERING ATMOSPHERE...

I DON'T UNDERSTAND...

...IS THIS THE WRONG PLANET?

MILLIONS LIVED HERE, THERE WERE FORESTS AND RIVERS!

THE EQUIPMENT SHOWS THERE'S BARELY AN ATMOSPHERE NOW.

IT'S A *GHOST* PLANET.

THIS IS THE SPACE FORCE STATION WHERE THE SHIP WAS SET TO RETURN.

SET DOWN ON THEIR ASTROPAD. THERE MUST BE SOME FORCE LEFT. THEY CAN'T ALL BE GONE!

THERE ARE NO SIGNS OF LIFE, METALLUS.

THERE MUST BE! HOW COULD THERE BE NO ONE?

ACTIVATE THAT WELCOME BEACON!

*THIS IS PLANET VORANOVA, FORMERLY THE CENTRAL GOVERNING WORLD OF THIS STAR SYSTEM.*

*THE PLANET WAS RAVAGED BY THE CREATURE OMNIKRON. THE POPULACE EVACUATED TO OTHER WORLDS.*

*VORANOVA CANNOT SUSTAIN MOST LIFE NOW. IF YOU ARE IN NEED OF ASSISTANCE PROCEED TO THE SPACE STATION XANDAR IN THE TUKON ASTEROID BELT.*

DIDN'T THE PRISONER MENTION THIS THREAT--

***CURSES!***

THEY LEAVE ME IN THAT HOLE AND THEN ***CHEAT ME*** OUT OF MY ***REVENGE!***

I TRIED TO TELL YOU, METALLUS.

THAT THREAT DESTROYED SEVERAL WORLDS, AND WIPED OUT THE SPACE FORCE.

THEY WOULD NEVER HAVE LEFT YOUR TEAM DOWN THERE. YOU KILLED THE OTHER REMAINING OFFICER WHO CAME BACK FOR YOU.

NOW I'M THE ONLY ONE LEFT.

LEAVE YOUR ANGER BACK IN THAT CAVE WHERE IT BELONGS. WE ALL HAVE TO REBUILD NOW WITH WHAT WE HAVE.

NEVER!

IF YOU ARE THE LAST, THAT IS *ONE* OFFICER *TOO MANY!*

YOU'RE FORCING MY HAND, METALLUS, I WARN YOU.

STOP!

THEY'RE ALL ATTACKING HIM!

*SPACE GHOST,* DO YOU NEED OUR HELP?!

*NO! KEEP THE CRUISER AT A DISTANCE! STAY AWAY FROM THIS!*

JOIN ME, MEN! BREAK DOWN HIS FORCE WALL!

WE'RE ALL LIVING VERSIONS OF YOUR POWER BANDS, OFFICER!

ORDER THEM TO STAND DOWN, METALLUS!

ELEMENT ZEO CHANNELS AND PULSES AMBIENT ENERGY...

IT DOESN'T MATTER!

ALL THAT MATTERS IS THAT THERE'S NOTHING LEFT!

...THEY'RE USING UP THEIR OWN LIFE FORCE. YOU'RE DESTROYING THEM!

THEN I HAVE NO CHOICE!

NO!!!

MY BODY! I'M DEAD!

I... WAS ALREADY DEAD.

BUT I MADE IT OUT OF THAT HOLE.

YOU DID.

YOU ARE FREE.

SPACE FORCE FIELD REPORT: DESTROYING HIS ARMOR ENDED THE MENACE OF METALS. YET WHAT REALLY HELD HIM TOGETHER WAS HIS HATRED. ONCE THERE WAS NOWHERE TO FOCUS IT, HE WAS GONE.

IN THE END METALLUS AND HIS MEN STILL DID THEIR ORIGINAL JOB AND DELIVERED ORE FOR THE SPACE FORCE.

IMAGINE HOW ANGRY HE'D BE KNOWING THAT.

SIX TONS OF ORE ONLY MADE NINE POWER BANDS?

ELEMENT ZEO IS SO RARE THAT IT TAKES THAT MUCH TO REFINE.

BUT THIS IS ONLY HALF OF WHAT WE NEED. YOU KNOW THE OTHER CRUCIAL PART?

OFFICERS WORTHY TO WEAR THEM.

RIGHT, JAN.

AND KEEP TRAINING THE ONES I KNOW WILL BE AMONG THE BEST.

POWER IS NOTHING WITHOUT THE RIGHT PEOPLE TO WIELD IT.

NOW I HAVE TO FIND THEM.

TO THE FUTURE!

# GHOSTS

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S. RUDE 2017

S. RUDE
2017

SPLOOSH

RRAWKK

RAWKK

# BIRDMAN

## IN THE INVISIBLE SUN!

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AVENGER! COME ON!

SPLUTT

SORRY. FISHING IS BEST AT DAWN. DIDN'T THINK YOU'D BE UP SO EARLY.

COULDN'T SLEEP. I HAD SOME IDEAS I HAD TO GET DOWN RIGHT AWAY.

FLUPP

I THINK I FOUND A WAY TO BOOST THE NEURAL LINK INTER-NATION BUILT INTO YOUR COLLAR THAT ALLOWS US TO COMMUNICATE.

WITH A SLIGHT ADJUSTMENT WE COULD STAY CONNECTED AT ALL TIMES--EVEN AS WE SLEEP!

YOU TAKE THIS COLLAR OFF ME FOR THAT AND YOU'RE NEVER GETTING IT BACK ON.

AVENGER NEURAL NET

HAHA! GOOD OLD AVENGER!

YOUR SARCASTIC JIBES ALWAYS BRIGHTEN MY DAY.

I DON'T KNOW WHAT SARCASM IS. I AM A BIRD.

SHRIIP

NOW THAT YOU MENTION IT, MAYBE THERE ARE TIMES WE SHOULDN'T SHARE THOUGHTS--

RRRRRING

LIKE WHEN YOU'RE FEEDING.

FINE. JUST REMEMBER TO RETURN THE FAVOR NEXT TIME YOU START PICTURING YOUR HUMAN MATING RITUALS.

GGGGGGGGG

INTER-NATION ALERT! IT'S FALCON 7!

SPEAKING OF.

BIRDMAN, FALCON 7 HERE.

THERE'S ANOTHER GIGANTIC MONSTER ON THE RAMPAGE, THIS TIME IN THE NEW ZEALAND COASTAL VILLAGE OF TIMARU.

ZZZ KFT ZZZ K

HOLD ON.

SORRY, STILL HAD THAT OLD HOLO-FILTER ON.

I'M EN ROUTE WITH AN INTER-NATION STRIKE TEAM AS WE SPEAK.

SAY NO MORE, FALCON 7. *BIRDMAN* IS ON THE WAY!

GREAT. IT'S DEFINITELY AN EMERGENCY, BUT YOU STILL HAVE TIME TO-- YOU KNOW--PUT ON SOME PANTS, OR--

ERR-- BIRDMAN *OUT!*

FWAAASH

JUST BARELY LESS RIDICULOUS THAN THE UNDERWEAR.

YOU'RE JUST *JEALOUS!*

NOT EVEN CLOSE.

YOU'RE JEALOUS AND I'M BIRDMAN!

I'M BIRDMAN!

BIIIRRRONAAAAN!

OY. HERE WE GO.

STAY INSIDE MY SOLAR COCOON, AVENGER.

WE'RE GOING--

SUPERSONIC!

CRA-AK

BOOM

TIMARU, NEW ZEALAND.

IT CAN'T BE! IT CAN'T BE TRUE!

RŪAUMOKO HAS RETURNED!

AAAIEE

THE GODS OF THE EARTH RISE AGAINST US!

K-K-RA KK K

INTER-NATION AGENTS, REPORT! WHAT THE HELL *IS* THIS THING?

DON'T PANIC, MA'AM.
WE'LL HAVE YOU FREE OF THIS GUNK IN A--
RŪAUMOKO IS ANGRY!
WHAT DID YOU SAY?
RŪAUMOKO?
SKLORPP
RŪAUMOKO CLAIMS US!
DAMN IT!
SPEOW
SPEOW
SPEEEE
HOLD ON!
SPLOTT
INTER-NATION AGENTS, VARY YOUR ANGLES OF ATTACK!

POUR IT ON!

IF WE CAN'T DESTROY HIM, WE CAN AT LEAST DISTRACT HIM FROM FALCON 7!

GGG-YA-H-HHH

INCOMING, AVENGER!

SWOOSH

YOU DISTRACTED HIM ALL RIGHT.

THOUGH THAT DOESN'T SEEM PARTICULARLY DIFFICULT.

SORRY ABOUT THE MESS.

EH-- NEEDED A SHOWER ANYWAY.

AS YOU CAN SEE, WE'VE DONE VERY LITTLE TO SLOW THIS WALKING MUDSLIDE.

BEST WE CAN DO IS EVACUATE THE PEOPLE IN THE MONSTER'S PATH.

*NOT* A MONSTER. *RŪAUMOKO.*

SHE KEEPS SAYING THAT. NOT SURE WHAT IT MEANS.

RŪAUMOKO IS AN ANCIENT MAORI DEITY.

A SPIRIT BEING WHO AFFECTS VOLCANOES, EARTHQUAKES, MUD-SLIDES, THE SOIL ITSELF.

BUT HE'S SEEN AS A BENEVOLENT ENTITY, INDIFFERENT AT WORST.

THIS SORT OF MALEVOLENT DESTRUCTION IS A TWISTED PARODY OF HIS TRUE NATURE.

NICE PULL, BUT WE NEED A LITTLE LESS ***RAY RANDALL,*** WORLD CLASS ARCHAEOL-OGIST--

AND A LITTLE MORE ***BIRDMAN,*** SOLAR-POWERED BUTT-KICKER.

RIGHT. SORRY.

YOU HEARD THE LADY! LET'S SHOW THIS THING WHAT ***BIRDMAN AND AVENGER*** CAN DO!

YEAH!

UH-- WHAT CAN WE DO HERE EXACTLY?

ZZZZZZZ

NOTHING LESS THAN UNLEASH THE FULL POWER OF ***RA!***

MY SOLAR BLASTS DO LITTLE BUT SLOW THE MASS OF MUD UNTIL IT CAN REFORM--LIKE PUNCHING AT A WATERFALL.

ZZZ

A WATERFALL THAT PUNCHES BACK.

WE'RE IN A STALEMATE!

WE CAN'T SEEM TO HARM IT, BUT IT CAN'T REACH US!

BOOM

BOOM

BOOM

YOU SURE ABOUT THAT?

IT'S TURNING BACK TOWARD THE VILLAGE!

LOOK!

PERHAPS THAT STRANGE MASK AT ITS CENTER HOLDS THE KEY.

THERE'S AN ENERGY ABOUT IT THAT FEELS... *FAMILIAR.*

IF ONLY I CAN PRY IT--

BIRDMAN, BE CAREFUL!

RRAWWKKK?

BIRDMAN!

SSSKKKK

SLOK

DARK.

NO SUN.

NO LIGHT AT ALL.

NO *BIRDMAN.*

NO *RAY RANDALL.*

NOTHING.

*BIRDMAN! BIRDMAN, CAN YOU HEAR ME?*

AVENGER?

I--I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S WRONG WITH ME. I CAN BARELY THINK.

CAN'T TELL WHICH WAY IS UP.

THERE IS ONLY DARKNESS.

SWALLOWING ALL LIGHT. DROWNING ME.

*NONSENSE.*

*THE SUN IS STILL HERE, STILL SHINING, STILL GIVING LIFE TO THE WORLD.*

*EVEN AT NIGHT IT LIGHTS THE MOON TO SHOW US IT NEVER LEAVES.*

*THE DARKNESS MAY SURROUND YOU, BUT THE LIGHT HASN'T GONE **ANYWHERE.** IT'S STILL **IN** YOU.*

*AND YOU ARE STILL **BIRDMAN.***

I AM.

I *AM* BIRDMAN.

I *AM* *BIRDMAN!*

THE END HAS COME FOR MY PEOPLE!

BLAAM!!

THE END!

RAY?

YOUR BOYFRIEND DID IT! HE BAKED THAT MUD PIE FROM THE INSIDE, LIKE IN A KILN!

HE'S NOT MY BOYFRIEND, AGENT RIZZO.

C'MON, RAY.

THERE HE IS! HE *DID* IT!

*BIRDMAN* DID IT!

CAN WE PET YOUR BIRD, MISTER?

*NO. TELL THEM NO.*

OF COURSE!

I HATE TO BREAK UP YOUR PETTING ZOO, BUT--

*FALCON 7!*

WHERE IS EVERYONE? I THOUGHT THIS WAS A TEAM DEBRIEFING.

SOME SENSITIVE INFORMATION HAS COME TO LIGHT-- I THOUGHT IT BEST HANDLED IN PRIVATE.

I'LL TRY TO MAKE THIS QUICK. I KNOW YOU MUST BE IN DIRE NEED OF A SOLAR RECHARGE.

AS YOU CAN TELL, THIS EVENT FITS THE PATTERN OF THE ATTACKS YOU FOILED EARLIER IN ***BOGOTA, WALES*** AND ***MONGOLIA.***

MYTHICAL MONSTERS, FORGOTTEN GODS, EARTH SPIRITS, SOMEHOW BROUGHT TO LIFE AND WREAKING HAVOC ON HUMANITY.

EACH ONE IN A DIFFERENT LOCALE WITH A DIFFERENT SET OF POWERS, BUT ONE GOAL-- ***CHAOS.***

SOUNDS LIKE THE WORK OF ***F.E.A.R.***

WE THOUGHT SO AT FIRST, BUT THEIR GOALS ARE USUALLY MORE CONCRETE: EXTORTION, LARCENY, POLITICAL UNREST.

THESE ATTACKS SEEM LIKE ***TEST RUNS*** FOR SOMETHING BIGGER.

I MEAN, WHY ATTACK A MAORI CULTURAL HERITAGE EVENT?

BY ANALYZING SURVEILLANCE FOOTAGE, OUR TEAM HAS DISCOVERED THE SAME GROUP OF PEOPLE PRESENT IN THE BACKGROUND OF ALL THESE EVENTS.

NOT RUNNING FROM THE CREATURES LIKE EVERYONE ELSE-- JUST STARING AT THEM, AS IF THEY'RE IN SOME SORT OF ***CONTACT*** WITH THEM--

MAYBE EVEN ***CONTROLLING*** THEM.

CAN I ***SEE*** THIS FOOTAGE, FALCON 7?

OF COURSE. I'M SORRY, DEV.

COULD YOU ZOOM IN FOR ME?

***DEV.*** YOU CAN CALL ME DEV.

WE'VE TALKED ABOUT THIS.

WHAT'S *THAT?* THAT SYMBOL AROUND THE WOMAN'S NECK?

THAT'S WHY I CLEARED THE ROOM. DON'T YOU RECOGNIZE IT?

IT REMINDS ME OF THE WORK I WAS DOING IN EGYPT BACK WHEN I WAS JUST RAY RANDALL.

YOU KNOW THAT TIME OF MY LIFE IS... *FOGGY* FOR ME.

YES, AND I'M SORRY TO BRING IT UP, BUT IT MAY BE THE KEY TO ALL THIS.

REMEMBER, YOU WEREN'T JUST SOME RANDOM CITIZEN--

BUT AN *ARCHAEOLOGIST* CONTRACTED BY INTER-NATION TO INVESTIGATE A SECRETIVE CULT IN CAIRO.

THE CULT OF *RA.*

RIGHT. AND SOMEHOW YOU FELL *AFOUL* OF THAT GROUP--

--GOT SHANGHAIED INTO ONE OF THEIR CRAZY RITUALS--

--AND WOUND UP IMBUED WITH THE SUN-BASED ENERGY OF A POWERFUL ENTITY ANCIENT EGYPTIANS KNEW AS *RA.*

AS FAR AS I *KNOW.*

MY LIFE BEFORE I BECAME BIRDMAN IS A PUZZLE I'VE NEVER QUITE BEEN ABLE TO PUT TOGETHER.

I--I'M SORRY TO MAKE YOU RELIVE THAT, BUT THIS GROUP SEEMS TO BE MADE UP OF *REMNANTS* OF THAT RA CULT.

AND NOW THEY'RE TRYING TO ACCESS THE POWER OF *OTHER* ANCIENT DEITIES THE WAY THEY DID WITH RA.

THIS ONE, THE SMALLER WOMAN.

SHE LOSES CONCENTRATION FOR A MOMENT--

--AT ABOUT THE TIME THE CREATURE NEARLY CRUSHES A CHILD. SHE FALTERS.

BUT WHEN SHE TRIES TO PULL AWAY, THIS LARGER FIGURE HELPS HER TO STAND HER GROUND.

OR *FORCES* HER. COULD BE OUR RINGLEADER, OR AT LEAST HIS MUSCLE.

YES. SHE SEEMS...

BIRDMAN?

FORGIVE ME.

I--I MUST BE MORE *DRAINED* THAN I THOUGHT.

I JUST NEED A LITTLE SUN.

I UNDERSTAND. I'LL BRIEF YOU SHOULD ANYTHING NEW COME UP.

OKAY, HE'S GONE. BRING IN THE ***CAPTIVE.***

SOME AVENUES OF INQUIRY ARE BEST EXPLORED WITHOUT AN ANGEL ON YOUR SHOULDER.

THAT WAS QUICK. WAS YOUR **MATING RITUAL** SUCCESSFUL?

AVENGER, OLD FRIEND, CAN WE ***NOT*** TALK FOR A WHILE?

I JUST WANT TO SOAR HERE IN THE SUN...

AND THE SILENCE.

YOU DON'T HAVE TO ASK ME TWICE.

LOOK, YOU'RE TALKING TO LITERALLY THE ***SWEETEST*** PERSON IN INTER-NATION. IT'S ALL ***DOWNHILL*** FROM ME.

I'VE SENT PEOPLE TO INTER-NATION BLACK SITES FOR QUESTIONING AND GOT BACK WHAT'S LEFT OF THEM IN AN ***ENVELOPE...***

ALONG WITH ALL THE ANSWERS I WANTED IN THE FIRST PLACE.

SO SAVE ME A LITTLE ***TIME,*** AND YOU A LOT OF ***PAIN--***

--AND TELL ME EXACTLY WHAT YOUR CABAL IS UP TO.

STILL NOTHING? PRETTY CONFIDENT FOR SOMEONE WHOSE FRIENDS LEFT HIM BEHIND LIKE SO MUCH GARBAGE.

WHY NOT? I GOT *GOD* ON MY SIDE.

OR SHOULD I SAY *GODS?* GOT 'EM IN A BIG DECK, LIKE *TRADING CARDS.*

MY BOSS, HE SHUFFLES THAT DECK AND SLAPS DOWN THE GOD HE NEEDS AT THE MOMENT. YOU SAW IT EARLIER ON THE BEACH.

*RŪAUMOKO.*

THEY GOT GODS FOR EVERYTHING, YOU KNOW. GODS OF EARTH, FIRE, WATER. GODS OF LOVE, DEATH.

EVEN GODS YOU NEVER THOUGHT OF, LIKE A GOD OF GRAFFITI, OR A GOD OF *UNDERWEAR.* FOR REAL.

THIS ISN'T A JOKE. PEOPLE *DIED* HERE.

LIKE *NINKILIM.* EVER HEAR OF HIM?

PLEASE SHARE.

HE'S AN OLD SUMERIAN GOD OF *VERMIN.*

BUGS, MICE, RATS, CENTIPEDES, ALL THAT.

POINT IS WE CAN MAKE THESE GODS *DANCE* WHENEVER WE WANT.

WHEREVER WE WANT.

BLAM BLAM

GAAAH!

BIRDMAN, CAN YOU READ ME?

BIRDMAN, REPORT BACK TO THE STAGING AREA!

WE'VE BEEN OVERRUN. I REPEAT-- BZZZTT!

SO MUCH FOR SILENCE.

COME, AVENGER. OUR FRIENDS NEED US!

TARGET THOSE CREATURES SWARMING THE TENT, AVENGER!

C'MON, TULLIBARD.

THE BOSS CAN'T KEEP UP THIS ATTACK FOREVER.

FALCON 7, WHERE ARE YOU?

DEV!

BIRDMAN!

HOLD STILL, DEV! THIS IS A TRICKY SHOT.

POOR LITTLE GUYS. DON'T WANT TO HURT THESE ANIMALS ANY MORE THAN NECESSARY.

SPEAK FOR YOURSELF. THEY'RE **DELICIOUS.**

FORGET ABOUT THE VERMIN, BIRDMAN. TARGET THE ***WATCHERS*** ON THE HILL.

THEY'RE CAUSING ALL THIS!

WATCHERS?

A SOLAR BURST SHOULD DISRUPT THEIR CONCENTRATION!

FOOSH!

OOHHH!

HOLDER'S DOWN!

GATHER HER UP. WE CAN'T AFFORD TO LOSE ANY-ONE--NOT NOW!

SKREEE!

GAH! MY EYES!

LEAVE HER.

THE INTER-NATION AGENTS ARE CLOSING IN.

WHEN I NEED HER AGAIN--

MENTOK WILL TAKE HER.

THEY'RE FADING AWAY!

FAN OUT!

GIVE ME A FULL SENSOR SCAN OF THE AREA!

ARE YOU ALL RIGHT, MISS?

MY SOLAR BLAST WAS MEANT TO ***STUN,*** NOT CAUSE PERMANENT HARM.

I'M FINE.

NOW THAT YOU'RE HERE.

I'M AFRAID THIS WAS JUST AN ACT TO GET AWAY FROM THOSE PEOPLE--

TO CONNECT WITH ***YOU.***

YOU--YOU DON'T ***REMEMBER*** ME, DO YOU?

SHOULD I?

SO MUCH HAS HAPPENED. SO MUCH HAS BEEN LOST.

I'M SORRY I HAD TO DO IT LIKE THIS, BUT I COULDN'T SEE ANY OTHER WAY.

NO MATTER WHO IT HURT OR WHAT IT COST ME, I HAD TO FIND YOU...

TO TELL YOU ABOUT OUR ***SON.***

S.R.U.D.

# Son of Birdman

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WHAT'S THIS PICTURE SUPPOSED TO BE, MENTON?

A MONSTER.

I CAN SEE THAT. YOU DRAW QUITE WELL.

WHAT I MEAN IS, WHY IS YOUR MONSTER EATING UP MRS. FAULKNER?

I DON'T KNOW.

SWAN

IT'S SUCH A GOOD DRAWING. YOU'RE QUITE TALENTED, MENTON.

BUT CAN YOU SEE WHY MRS. FAULKNER MIGHT BE UPSET TO FIND A PICTURE LIKE THIS IN HER CLASSROOM?

I-- I DON'T KNOW.

AND IS THIS YOU IN THE CORNER WATCHING WHAT'S HAPPENING TO MRS. FAULKNER? WHY ARE YOU COLORED ALL GREEN?

I DON'T KNOW. I LIKE GREEN. LIKE ALIENS. LIKE LIZARDS.

NOT LIKE OTHER PEOPLE.

The INFLUENCE of a good TEACHER NEVER erased

AND THESE SEEM TO BE YOUR CLASSMATES HERE, OR WHAT'S LEFT OF THEM.

WHY DID THE MONSTER WANT TO HURT THEM, MENTON?

HE *DIDN'T.* HE DIDN'T WANT TO HURT *ANY*BODY.

HE JUST WANTED THEM TO BE QUIET.

WELL, I GO PAST MRS. FAULKNER'S ROOM EVERY DAY AND I NEVER HEAR ANY COMMOTION.

SHE RUNS A VERY ORDERLY CLASSROOM AS FAR AS I CAN TELL. NOTHING AT ALL LIKE THIS.

BUT *I* CAN STILL HEAR THEM. I CAN HEAR EVERYBODY ALL THE TIME.

I CAN HEAR ***YOU*** RIGHT NOW.

I WOULD HOPE SO. I'M SPEAKING DIRECTLY TO YOU.

NO, I MEAN WHEN YOU'RE ***NOT*** TALKING.

I CAN HEAR YOU INSIDE YOUR OWN HEAD THINKING ABOUT HOW MY MOMMA DRINKS AND DADDY RUN OFF SO MAYBE THIS IS THE BEST ANYONE COULD HOPE FOR ME THE WAY I AM.

MENTON, I--

I HEAR THOSE THINGS FROM EVERYONE EVERYWHERE AND I WANT IT TO BE QUIET.

I WANT IT TO BE QUIET SO I CAN THINK MY ***OWN*** THOUGHTS AND HEAR MY ***OWN*** VOICE.

MENTON--

BE.

QUIET!

TAKE YOUR TIME, CARRIE. THINK ABOUT THE WAY WE SOLVED THE PROBLEM EARLIER IN--

EEEEEEEE!

DID YOU HEAR SOMETHING?

ROOM 3

LIKE A SCREAM? SOUNDED LIKE IT CAME FROM MRS. SWANTON'S OFFICE.

OH, MY GOD-- IRENE!

IRENE-- CAN YOU HEAR ME?

HEAR.

I CAN HEAR.

I CAN HEAR YOU ALL. SHE--

SHE WOULDN'T BE QUIET.

SHE WOULDN'T--

BE--

QUIET.

DID HE SAY SOMETHING? I THINK HE SAID SOMETHING.

SHUT UP, LUNSFORD.

WHATEVER, TULLIBARD. HOW LONG ARE WE GOING TO STAND HERE LIKE THIS?

AS LONG AS IT TAKES FOR THE RITUAL TO BE COMPLETE. AS LONG AS ***MENTOK*** DEMANDS.

BUT IT'S BEEN ***HOURS.***

NO ONE KNOWS WHAT GOES ON IN HIS MIND, LUNSFORD, ESPECIALLY SOMEONE AS LIMITED AS YOU. EVERY MOVE HE MAKES IS ***PRECISE.***

EVERY COG HE SETS INTO HIS GREAT MACHINE--OF WHICH, SOMEHOW, ***YOU*** ARE A PART--IS EXPERTLY BALANCED.

YOU'VE SEEN WHAT HE CAN DO. HE'S CALLED THE MIND-TAKER FOR A REASON.

YOU'VE SEEN HIM BRING ***GODS*** TO HEEL WITH THE COMBINED POWER OF OUR MINDS.

SO, FOR YOUR OWN SAKE--PLEASE SHUT UP.

L4

L4

L4

*AH,* HE CAN'T EVEN HEAR US.

BUT I *CAN*, LUNSFORD.

THAT'S THE PROBLEM.

I CAN HEAR *ALL* OF YOU...

...EVERYWHERE ON THIS GLOBE.

YOUR SENSELESS HOPES, YOUR LAUGHABLE DESIRES, YOUR PETTY LUSTS YOU DARE NOT LET BECOME COHERENT THOUGHTS.

I HEAR THEM ALL, LIKE RATS SCURRYING IN WALLS. LIKE BAREFOOT ARMIES PADDING THROUGH WET FORESTS--

BEDSPRINGS SIGHING UNDER SLEEPLESS BODIES, JUNKYARDS LIFTED TO HEAVEN BY STORMS--

BONES CLACKING TOGETHER IN UPENDED GRAVES--

BUT SOON... SOON I WILL HAVE QUIET.

AND *YOU* WILL HELP BRING IT TO ME.

PARKING CENTER

ASSUME YOUR PLACES. WE WILL SUMMON THE FLESHLESS GOD *TONIGHT.*

HE WILL SERVE ME AS RA WOULD *NOT...* AND BLANKET THIS PLANET IN SILENCE AT LAST.

BUT WITHOUT HOLDER...

L4

HOLDER WAS *WEAK.* NOW, NO MORE SPEAKING.

*FROM THIS MOMENT ON OUR LANGUAGE IS ONE OF PURE THOUGHT.*

*LUNSFORD, GIVE ME YOUR ENVY.*

*NGUYEN, YOUR ANXIETY.*

*HAMILTON, YOUR LOATHING.*

*TULLIBARD, YOUR CRUELTY.*

*ALL OF YOU-- OPEN YOUR BASEST, TRUEST SELVES TO ME.*

*LET ME WEAVE YOUR RAW EMOTIONS INTO A LADDER THAT CAN REACH INTO SPACE, BEYOND THE STARS--*

*TO THAT EXPANSE BEHIND HEAVEN AND HELL WHERE CREATION ITSELF COLLAPSES INTO SILENT CHAOS.*

*LET US CLIMB THAT LADDER TOGETHER, REACH INTO THAT VOID--*

AND PULL DOWN A GOD.

NO! NO!

OH, GOD.

ALL OF YOU, HOLD YOUR GROUND!

HOLD FAST FOR MENTOK!

I-- I *CAN'T*-- IT'S *TOO MUCH!*

THE AIR. IT'S LIKE FLOATING IN WARM MUD.

THE COLORS. THE COLORS ARE *GONE.*

AND SMELLS. THEY'RE GONE, TOO!

I CAN'T! I CAN'T DO THIS!

HELP US, MENTOK!

HOLD!

FWUMP

I--I'M SORRY, MENTOK. WE WERE TOO WEAK.

IT WAS ***MY*** ERROR, CHILDREN, MY HUBRIS. I TRIED TO FLY OUR PLANE WITH A WING MISSING.

NO, OUR FAMILY MUST BE ***COMPLETE*** FOR OUR HOLY RITUAL TO WORK.

WE NEED A VERY SPECIAL KIND OF ***PAIN*** TO INVITE THE FLESHLESS GOD.

A PAIN MAINTAINED BY ONLY ONE WOMAN.

"WE NEED JEN HOLDER."

WHAT DO YOU MEAN *"OUR SON"*?

I'VE NEVER SEEN YOU BEFORE IN MY LIFE.

I KNEW YOU HAD CHANGED. I KNEW ASSUMING THE MANTLE OF RA MEANT LOSING A PART OF YOURSELF.

I JUST DIDN'T THINK YOU COULD COMPLETELY FORGET SOMEONE YOU LOVED.

IT'S ME--*JEN.* JEN HOLDER.

YOUR EYES. SOMETHING ABOUT YOUR EYES.

QUITE MOVING.

FAR-FETCHED AS HELL, BUT WELL ACTED. OSCAR-WORTHY. ***DAYTIME EMMY,*** AT LEAST.

BUT WHAT IF SHE *IS* TELLING THE TRUTH?

LOOK IN A MIRROR, CHIEF. YOU'RE A WHOLE PERSON AND THEN SOME.

AND WHATEVER THIS ***SUSPECT*** HAS TO ADD TO THAT CAN BE SHARED FROM A HOLDING CELL.

I COULD FINALLY LEARN ABOUT MY PAST, FINALLY BE A WHOLE PERSON.

RAY, DON'T LET HER TAKE ME. THERE'S NO TIME.

RAY, THERE'S NO TIME FOR THIS. OUR SON--

OUR SON IS *DYING.*

AND YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN SAVE HIM.

SNAP

ENOUGH. THIS IS A *WAR ZONE,* BIRDMAN.

CLIK!

RAY!

I LOST AGENTS HERE TODAY, NOT TO MENTION THE CIVILIAN CASUALTIES.

AND THIS LADY WAS AT LEAST PARTLY RESPONSIBLE.

SHE CAN'T JUST *WALK.*

I--I'M TAKING HER. I HAVE TO KNOW THE TRUTH.

I'M SORRY, DEV.

NOT SORRY *ENOUGH,* I GUESS.

FWASH

THEY'RE GONE. NOT EVEN ON RADAR.

GALLANTRY'S GOING TO GET THAT GUY KILLED SOMEDAY.

WHAT IS THIS PLACE? IT DOESN'T LOOK LIKE A HOSPITAL.

Essence of MERCY HOSPICE and LONG-TERM CARE

A PRIVATE HOSPICE. IT COSTS A FORTUNE, BUT BEING PART OF MENTOK'S GROUP MEANS MONEY IS NO OBJECT.

***MENTOK.*** MENTOK THE MIND-TAKER.

MS. HOLDER, THAT MAN IS A WANTED CRIMINAL. INTER-NATION HAS BEEN AFTER HIM FOR YEARS.

YOU DIDN'T ***ALWAYS*** FEEL THAT WAY.

YOU REALLY DON'T REMEMBER, DO YOU?

TAKE OFF THAT SILLY MASK. LET ME SEE YOU THE WAY I REMEMBER YOU.

LET ME SEE THE MAN I FELL IN LOVE WITH IN CAIRO.

CAIRO.

I--I CAME TO CAIRO TO INVESTIGATE A GROUP STEALING RARE ARTIFACTS, PRACTICING ARCANE RITES.

AND YOU FOUND THEM. YOU CAME THERE AS *RAY RANDALL*--

--BUT YOU *LEFT* AS THE LIVING VESSEL OF THE SUN GOD RA.

YOU ALSO LEFT ME WITH YOUR *SON.*

BUT WHY? WHY WOULD I LEAVE MY FAMILY LIKE THAT?

YOU *CHANGED.* ABSORBING THE ESSENCE OF RA WAS LIKE DROPPING A BLOCK OF ICE INTO A FULL CUP.

WHAT WAS THERE BEFORE SPILLED OUT AND DRIED UP.

HEY, MS. H. NO CHANGE IN THE LITTLE GUY.

THANKS, BETO.

HEY! I KNOW THAT GUY... YOU'RE...

THE POWER OF RA MEANS MORE THAN FLYING AROUND ZAPPING BAD GUYS, RAY.

IT TAPS INTO THE SOUL OF THE SUN, THE ESSENCE OF LIGHT-- OF *LIFE* ITSELF.

I'VE BEEN STUDYING WHAT YOU DO AS BIRDMAN FOR YEARS.

YOU'RE BARELY BREAKING THE SURFACE OF THE WELL OF POWER RA HAS CHOSEN TO STORE IN YOU.

A WELL INTER-NATION DOESN'T WANT YOU TO KNOW IS EVEN THERE.

THAT'S WHY I WENT LOOKING FOR YOU, RAY.

I WASN'T SURE YOU WERE BIRDMAN AT FIRST, BUT ONCE I HEARD YOUR VOICE I KNEW.

I SAW THE POWER OF RA MENTOK WOULD'VE *PERVERTED* NOW DEVOTED TO DECENCY.

AS SILLY AS IT SOUNDS, YOU *INSPIRED* ME.

PRIVATE

HOURS 9-9 PM

BUT YOU STAYED WITH HIM--WITH HIS CULT.

I LEFT WHEN YOU DID, BUT WHEN JACOB GOT SICK, WELL--

ZZZZZZ

I THOUGHT MENTOK MAY LEAD ME TO A KIND OF POWER THAT COULD HEAL HIM.

I WAS DESPERATE.

JACOB.

HE LOOKS SO PEACEFUL.

BUT THERE'S A WAR GOING ON IN HIS BRAIN. A WAR HE'S LOSING-- ALREADY LOST.

HE WAS DIAGNOSED WITH A BRAIN TUMOR A YEAR AGO.

SURGICAL REMOVAL WAS SUCCESSFUL, BUT THE TRAUMA TO THE SURROUNDING TISSUE WAS EXTENSIVE.

IT SET OFF A SERIES OF SEIZURES THAT DAMAGED AREAS THAT WERE ORIGINALLY HEALTHY--

LIKE A FIRE BURNING ITS WAY THROUGH A FOREST.

HE NEVER WOKE UP.

I HAVEN'T EVEN HEARD HIS VOICE SINCE THE DAY HE WENT INTO SURGERY.

I--I DON'T KNOW WHAT I CAN DO.

I'M NOT SURE EITHER.

I JUST KNOW THE POWER OF RA IS CAPABLE OF *MIRACLES.*

TOUCH HIM.

LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE ON HIM, *INTO* HIM.

LET THE LIGHT FIND ITS WAY INTO THE BROKEN PLACES.

LET IT DRIVE THE DARKNESS FROM YOUR SON.

I FEEL IT.

I FEEL--

MOM?

JACOB?

MOM, LOOK. IT'S AN ANGEL.

AN ANGEL COME TO--

TO...

JACOB?

HE WAS HERE FOR JUST A SECOND AND THEN--

I--I TRIED.

I SAW WHAT YOU SAID--THE DARK PLACES. I LET MY LIGHT FLOW INTO THEM.

I GAVE IT EVERYTHING I HAD.

IT-- IT WASN'T ENOUGH.

YOU KNOW, FOR A MOMENT I WAS ALMOST ROOTING FOR YOU, RANDALL.

MENTOK!

I GENUINELY WANTED TO SEE IF YOU COULD USE THE POWER OF RA FOR SOMETHING MORE THAN YOUR SUPERHERO DRESS-UP GAMES.

I DON'T NEED MY POWERS TO STOP YOU.

FWAMM

UNGH!

ACTUALLY, IT SEEMS YOU--

--DO.

HOLD IT, BIRDMAN!

YOUR *GUN*, TULLIBARD.

MENTOK, PLEASE...

MENTOK!

NOT FOR ME, TULLIBARD. FOR *HER.*

YOU KNOW WHAT MUST BE DONE, DEAR...

FOR YOUR *SON.*

IT'S A SIMPLE EXCHANGE, MS. HOLDER. IF YOU WANT YOUR SON TO LIVE...

*BIRDMAN MUST DIE.*

PHIL HESTER
writer
STEVE RUDE
artist

MY INSTRUCTIONS COULDN'T HAVE BEEN CLEARER, MS. HOLDER. IF YOU WANT YOUR SON TO LIVE--

KILL BIRDMAN.

GIVE IT UP, MENTOK. SHE DOESN'T TAKE ORDERS FROM YOU ANYMORE.

JOHN KALISZ
COLORIST, INTERIOR & COVER
ALW'S DAVE LANPHEAR
LETTERER
MARIE JAVINS
GROUP EDITOR
MICHAEL MCCALISTER
ASSISTANT EDITOR
JOEY CAVALIERI
AVENGER
STEVE RUDE
COVER ARTIST

Present:

RAY, I--I'M SORRY, BUT MY *SON.*

BIRDMAN

im:

MY JACOB.

KLIK

THE LIGHT AHEAD

ALAS, IT WAS NEVER LOADED.

I NEED YOUR *DESPAIR,* DEAR.

OH, GOD. RAY-- FORGIVE ME.

I'M SO SORRY!

THIS LITTLE TEST OF CHARACTER PRACTICALLY *DROWNED* YOUR MIND IN MISERY--MISERY I CAN HARNESS TO CAPTURE A *GOD.*

AS FOR *BIRDMAN...* WHENEVER YOU'RE READY, GENTLEMEN.

KA-CHUNK

EVERYONE **FREEZE!** YOU'RE UNDER ARREST BY AUTHORITY OF INTER-NATION!

SKREEEE!

HANDS IN THE AIR!

GAHH! NOT AGAIN!

OF COURSE, OF COURSE.

FLASH

WHAT THE HELL?

WHERE'D THEY GO?

THEY DIDN'T GO ANYWHERE, DAMN IT. IT'S AN *ILLUSION.*

THIS MENTOK GUY'S WHOLE GAME IS *MIND CONTROL.*

HIS GROUP IS STILL SOMEWHERE IN THE FACILITY.

FAN OUT AND REPORT BACK THE SECOND YOU COME ACROSS ANYTHING OUT OF THE ORDINARY.

RAY?

RAY, ARE YOU OKAY?

WHY? WHY DIDN'T YOU TELL ME?

WHY DIDN'T YOU TELL ME WHAT I WAS?

MENTOK, THIS PLACE IS CRAWLING WITH INTER-NATION SOLDIERS. ILLUSIONS OR NOT, THEY'LL BE ON US SOON.

IT DOESN'T MATTER.

NO MORE RUNNING. NO MORE HIDING.

BY THE TIME THEY FIND US THIS WORLD WILL BE OUR *PLAYTHING.*

ANYTHING WE DESIRE WILL BECOME A REALITY WITH BUT A SIMPLE THOUGHT.

ANYTHING, MS. HOLDER.

ALL WE NEED IS A FEW MOMENTS OF COMPLETE CONCENTRATION.

AS YOU HAVE IN THE PAST, OPEN YOUR INNER SELVES TO ME.

LET ME TAKE YOUR FEARS, YOUR HOPES, YOUR DESIRES, YOUR SHAME.

LET ME MELT IT ALL IN THE CRUCIBLE THAT IS THE MIND OF MENTOK--

--AND FORGE IT--

--INTO A KEY TO ANOTHER WORLD.

MOVEMENT AHEAD.

I THINK IT'S ONE OF THE HOSPICE PATIENTS.

THIS IS WEIRD, MAN. LIKE, EVEN WEIRDER THAN NORMAL.

71

72

73

SIR, THERE'S AN ONGOING EMERGENCY SITUATION.

WE NEED YOU TO RETURN TO YOUR ROOM AS--

CARPENTER, LOOK AT HIS FEET.

OH, MY GOD. THE PATIENTS.

71

I FEEL IT, TOO.

SOMETHING *PULLING* ME *FROM INSIDE.*

COME TO ME, CHILDREN.

GIVE ME YOUR MINDS--

--OR I WILL TAKE THEM!

WHOLE PLACE IS SHAKING APART. I COULD USE A LITTLE HELP HERE, BIRD--

WHO *AM* I?

IS *ANYTHING* ABOUT ME REAL?

JEN TOLD ME THAT I USED TO BE ONE OF THOSE *CULTISTS.*

THAT MUCH IS TRUE, BUT EVERYTHING ELSE ABOUT HER STORY IS A *LIE.* I SCANNED HER FILE ON THE WAY HERE.

NOT-- NOT MY *SON?* BUT I FELT A *CONNECTION* BETWEEN US.

I FELT *LOVE.*

THAT'S BECAUSE YOU'RE A GOOD *PERSON,* RAY.

YOU NEVER HAD A SON WITH HER.

SHE LEARNED YOU HAD A BLANK SPOT IN YOUR MEMORY AND SHE *EXPLOITED* IT.

YOU *WANT* TO LOVE PEOPLE. YOU *WANT* TO HELP PEOPLE.

THAT'S *ALL* YOU NEED TO KNOW.

YOU *ARE* A GOOD PERSON, PLEASE REMEMBER THAT, RAY-- BUT YOU WEREN'T *ALWAYS.*

BEFORE YOU ACCEPTED THE MANTLE OF RA YOU WERE...WELL, *NOT GREAT.*

BUT YOU KNOW MORE. YOU KNOW THE *WHOLE* TRUTH.

*TELL ME,* DEV.

YOU WERE BRILLIANT, BUT YOU WERE ALSO SELFISH, ARROGANT, WILLING TO DO ANYTHING TO ADVANCE YOUR CAREER.

"THAT BRILLIANCE MADE YOU A VALUABLE ASSET TO INTER-NATION, AND WE UTILIZED IT.

"BUT AFTER YOU TOOK ON THE POWER OF RA, YOU BECAME SOMETHING MORE, SOMETHING PURE AND UNCOMPLICATED.

"YOU BECAME, WELL--YOU BECAME A GOOD GUY.

"A VERY, VERY ***POWERFUL*** GOOD GUY.

"FILLING IN THE HOLES IN YOUR MEMORY MEANT TAMPERING WITH THAT AWESOME POWER AND ALL THE GOOD IT COULD DO FOR US.

"SO WE LET IT ***BE.*** WE LET IT BE, AND KEPT HOPING YOU WOULD NEVER ***ASK...***

"THAT YOU'D KEEP SHINING AGAINST THE DARK WITHOUT EVER SPOTTING THE SHADOW STRETCHING OUT BEHIND YOU."

CAN YOU FORGIVE ME FOR THAT?

SHKROOM

HE DID IT. THE MADMAN DID IT.

KEEP CONCENTRATING. WE'RE ALMOST THERE.

I DIDN'T THINK--I DIDN'T THINK IT WOULD BE LIKE THIS.

THOSE PEOPLE. THEIR ***BODIES.***

***DEAD*** *BODIES! **DYING** BODIES! NOW A PORTAL TO A BETTER WORLD!*

THE PERFECT VESSEL FOR THE FLESHLESS GOD!

YOUR WORK HAS BORNE FRUIT RIPER AND RICHER THAN ALL WE ACCOMPLISHED IN CAIRO, MY CHILDREN.

THE THRESHOLD IS **OPEN.** THE FORM **WITHOUT** FORM REACHES INTO OUR WORLD!

LET IT REACH THROUGH **YOU!**

**FALCON 7** CALLING INTER-NATION COMMAND.

FALCON 7 HERE, DO YOU READ ME? REQUEST ***TACTICAL STRIKE*** ON MY--

KZZZT

I CAN'T GET THROUGH. WHATEVER THEY'RE DOING IS ***WARPING*** MAGNETIC FIELDS.

LIKE SHE SAID, AVENGER.

IT'S UP TO US.

IT'S UP TO US.

SO, YOU STILL BIRDMAN OR WHAT?

ABOUT. FREAKING. TIME.

I SEE THE OLD GODS WON'T GO GRACEFULLY.

THEY THROW THEIR **TOYS** AT US, CHILDREN.

LET'S SHOW THEM WHAT OUR **NEW** GOD CAN DO.

NO GODS, MENTOK. JUST YOU AND ME!

HOW **ASHAMED** I FEEL TO HAVE EVER SOUGHT THE POWER OF RA.

I'M NOT GOING TO LIE. THIS IS FREAKING ME OUT A LITTLE.

THE POWER OF A **FRAUD!**

SING TO HIM, MY CHILDREN.

DO YOU HEAR THEIR HYMN, BIRDMAN? THEY PRAISE THE FLESHLESS GOD WHO COMES TO SWALLOW THE SUN.

HOW LONG WILL YOUR SOLAR SHIELD HOLD UP WITHOUT THE SUN THAT POWERS YOU?

HOW LONG WILL YOU BE ABLE TO HIDE FROM THE **TRUTH?**

I CAN FEEL YOU IN MY HEAD, MENTOK.

TRYING TO MAKE ME ONE OF YOURS.

BUT WITH ALL YOUR FOCUS ON BIRDMAN, MAYBE I CAN STAY UNDER THE RADAR--

--LONG ENOUGH TO TAKE OUT ONE OF THE ***COGS*** IN YOUR MACHINE.

RANDALL, I KNOW WHAT YOU **WERE**--WHAT YOU WILL BE AGAIN.

I REMEMBER THE MAN WHO CAME TO CAIRO **HUNGRY** FOR POWER.

DROP YOUR SHIELD AND LET **MY** POWER WASH THE DELUSION OF RA OUT OF YOUR MIND.

STOP BEING A PUPPET TO A DEAD GOD.

BE RAY RANDALL AGAIN!

UNNGGHH!

BIRDMAN.

JACOB, IS THAT YOU?

NO, IT'S ME-- JEN.

HOW AM I HEARING YOU? HOW AM I SEEING ANY OF THIS?

I'M SENDING YOU THIS IMAGE ON THE SAME WAVELENGTH AS MENTOK'S PSYCHIC ATTACK.

HIS POWER IS SO VAST NOW HE DOESN'T EVEN NOTICE IT.

BUT YOU CAN HEAR ME, CAN'T YOU?

YOU LIED. YOU LIED TO ME, TOO.

YOU **ALL** LIED.

I DID IT FOR JACOB.

THAT'S WHY I WANTED TO SHOW YOU HIS FACE ONE MORE TIME. THE MEMORY WE SHARE.

A SMALL LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS THAT MENTOK IS FLOODING YOUR MIND WITH.

HE'S ATTACKING YOU WITH THE PAST-- WITH YOUR DOUBT ABOUT WHAT YOU ARE.

BUT WHAT YOU DID FOR JACOB WAS REAL.

MENTOK WON'T HEAL HIM. I KNOW THAT NOW.

HIS MIND IS SO POWERFUL NOW HE CAN'T HIDE HIS THOUGHTS.

HE WANTS EVERYTHING **DEAD.** EVERYTHING SILENT.

WE'RE ALL PIECES HE'LL THROW INTO THE FIRE AS SOON AS HIS GAME IS WON.

BUT YOU GAVE JACOB A MOMENT OF HOPE. A MOMENT OF GRACE.

IT DOESN'T MATTER THAT I TRICKED YOU INTO DOING IT.

IT DOESN'T MATTER WHO YOU **WERE** OR WHO I TOLD YOU I WAS.

I JUST WANTED YOU TO KNOW... BEFORE THE END.

NO MATTER **WHAT** HAPPENS, YOU DID THIS ONE GOOD, **BEAUTIFUL** THING.

A MIRACLE.

ANYTHING THAT CAME BEFORE... IS JUST A SHADOW.

A SHADOW.

A SHADOW STRETCHING OUT BEHIND ME...

BECAUSE THE LIGHT IS *AHEAD* OF ME.

I SHOULD HAVE BEEN FOLLOWING AVENGER'S LEAD ALL ALONG.

IF I FALL, I WILL FALL WITH MY WINGS *SPREAD.*

*THEN FALL, BIRDMAN!*

MAYBE I'M NOT STRONG ENOUGH TO FIGHT YOU, MENTOK.

NOT VICIOUS ENOUGH TO TRADE VIOLENCE FOR VIOLENCE.

I COULD NEVER *MATCH* YOUR CRUELTY.

BUT MAYBE I CAN *CHANGE* IT.

SLURK

MAYBE I CAN SHOW YOU-- SHOW *ALL* OF YOU-- THE SAME HEALING LIGHT I SHOWED JACOB.

LAUGHABLE CLAPTRAP. THE MEWLING RATIONAL-IZATIONS...

...OF THE *DEFEATED.*

THE LIGHT OF RA WAS NEVER ANYTHING MORE THAN THE LIGHT INSIDE ALL LIFE.

JACOB SHOWED ME.

OPEN YOUR EYES TO IT.

*OPEN YOUR EYES!*

CAN'T GET A SHOT ON MENTOK.

BUT THERE YOU ARE, HOLDER. THE PERSON WHO MADE THIS MESS IN THE FIRST PLACE.

THAT *LIGHT!*

ZARK

UNGH!

WHAT ARE YOU DOING? WHY ARE YOU *STOPPING?*

WE'RE ON THE VERGE OF *VICTORY!*

WE HEARD YOUR *MIND,* MENTOK.

WHEN YOUR POWER GREW, YOUR THOUGHTS POURED INTO OUR MINDS UNCHECKED.

NOW YOU KNOW HOW I FEEL AT EVERY MOMENT! WHY I NEED *SILENCE!*

WE ALSO KNOW HOW *DISPOSABLE* YOU AND YOUR FLESHLESS GOD THINK WE ARE.

AND IT ONLY TOOK A FLASH OF LIGHT TO SHOW US THE WAY *OUT* OF YOUR MAZE.

*NO!* NOT NOW!

*WITHOUT YOUR MINDS THE PORTAL IS COLLAPSING!*

THAT *LIGHT!* TURN OFF THAT INSIPID LIGHT!

LET IT *IN*, MENTOK.

LET IT CLEANSE YOU AS IT DID YOUR FOLLOWERS.

SO BRIGHT! SO BRIGHT I CAN--I CAN *HEAR* IT!

TURN IT OFF...

...OR I'LL TEAR YOUR *MIND* TO PIECES!

DO YOU HEAR ME, BIRDMAN? TO *PIECES!*

I DON'T WANT TO HURT YOU, MENTOK.

*BUT* I DO.

*GAHH!*

*TO--*

*PIECES!*

MENTOK--

HANDS OFF THE BIRD.

AAHHH

IN THROUGH THE OUT DOOR, CHUMP.

I ALMOST GOT THROUGH TO HIM, BUT HE CHOSE DARKNESS-- A *WORLD* OF DARKNESS.

FOR HIS SAKE, I HOPE IT'S *QUIET* THERE.

HHHHH

THE NIGHTMARE IS FINALLY OVER--

FOR SOME OF US.

I'VE GOT YOU, JEN.

B-BIRDMAN-- EVEN AFTER EVERYTHING I DID TO YOU?

OF COURSE.

I'M THE GOOD GUY, REMEMBER?

LISTEN, BIRDMAN, ABOUT YOUR HISTORY.

I DON'T EXPECT YOU TO FORGIVE INTER-NATION FOR WITHHOLDING THE TRUTH ALL THESE YEARS.

BUT PLEASE GIVE US-- GIVE ***ME*** A CHANCE TO EARN BACK YOUR TRUST.

WE'LL START BY OPENING OUR FILES COMPLETELY. EVERYTHING ***WE*** KNOW, ***YOU'LL*** KNOW.

CAREFUL. PLEASE BE CAREFUL WITH HIM.

HE'S STABLE, MA'AM.

TODAY SHOULD SHOW YOU JUST HOW MUCH GOOD WE CAN DO TOGETHER.

TOGETHER.

SO... YOU TWO GOING TO SETTLE DOWN? BUILD A NEST?

HEY!

AS FOR MENTOK.

THAT BIZARRE PORTAL SEEMED TO COLLAPSE ON HIM AS SOON AS HE FELL THROUGH.

NOT A TRACE.

YO, *BIRDMAN!* YOU FORGOT TO SIGN OUT ON THE VISITOR'S LOG.

YOU CAN SIGN MY COMIC, TOO!

HA. WILL DO, BETO!

THAT REMINDS ME.

*THIS* FELL OFF MENTOK'S PERSON.

ALL THAT'S LEFT OF HIM NOW, I SUPPOSE.

IN *THIS* DIMENSION, ANYWAY.

IS THIS A KID'S DRAWING? SOMETHING FROM HIS PAST?

OR PERHAPS HIS FUTURE. POOR DEVIL.

REMEMBER, RAY. WE'LL DO EVERYTHING WE CAN TO FILL ANY HOLES IN YOUR MEMORY.

I KNOW ENOUGH, DEV.

IT DOESN'T MATTER WHO I WAS. IT MATTERS WHO I *CAN* BE.

I CAN BE RAY RANDALL OR I CAN BE *BIRDMAN.*

AND FRANKLY, BIRDMAN IS *WAY* COOLER.

*OF COURSE. IT SAYS **BIRD** RIGHT IN YOUR NAME.*

RIGHT AS ALWAYS, AVENGER. I'M *BIRDMAN.*

*WAIT. YOU'RE NOT GOING TO DO THAT **THING** AGAIN, ARE YOU?*

*THE **YELLING YOUR NAME** THING?*

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

# BIRDMAN!!!!

*EH. TO TELL THE TRUTH, I KIND OF DIG IT.*

THE END

VARIANT COVER GALLERY

FUTURE QUEST PRESENTS #1 variant cover by STEVE "THE DUDE" RUDE

FUTURE QUEST PRESENTS #2 variant cover by MAC REY

FUTURE QUEST PRESENTS #3 variant cover by JILL THOMPSON

FUTURE QUEST PRESENTS

FUTURE QUEST PRESENTS #4 variant cover by SCOTT KOLINS

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FUTURE QUEST PRESENTS #1, #2 and #3 cover sketches
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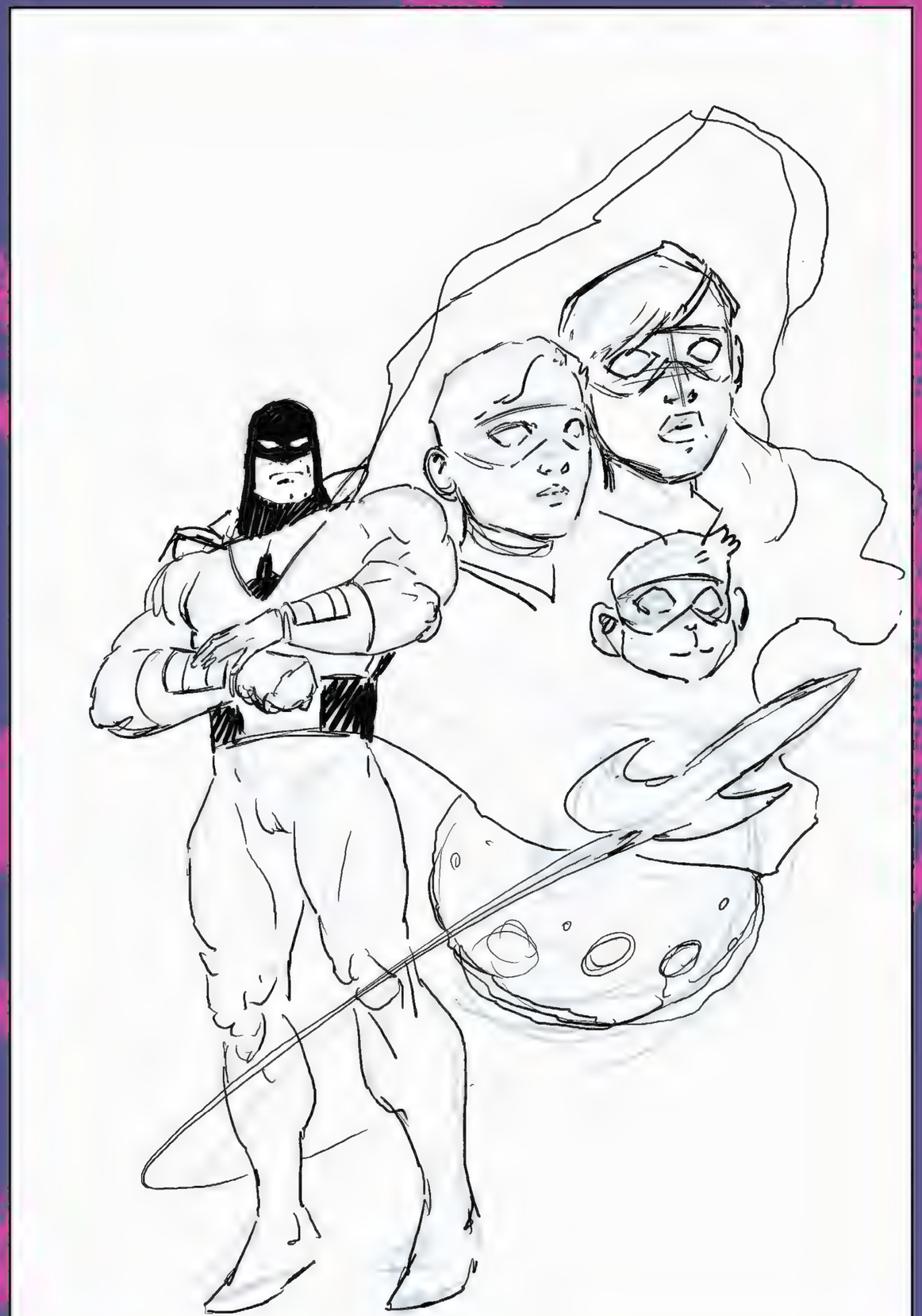
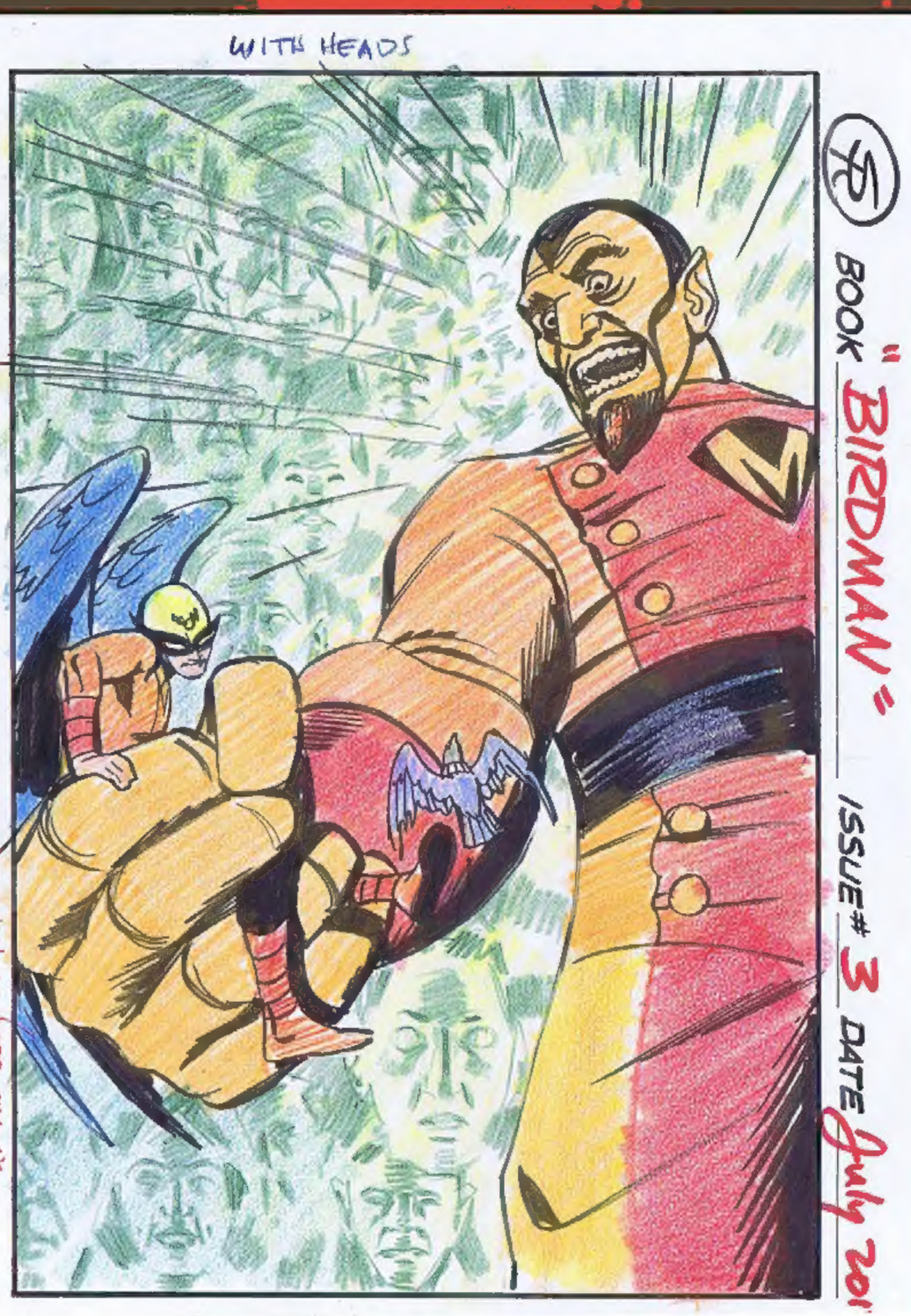


BIRDMAN cover #2 (R) July 2017

# FUTURE QUEST PRESENTS#5, #6 and #7 inks and sketches by STEVE "THE DUDE" RUDE


WITH HEADS
BOOK "BIRDMAN" ISSUE# 3 DATE July 201
A seemingly triumphant Mek holds the fate of Birdman in his hands, as his bevy of followers look on.

# FUTURE QUEST PRESENTS #5 layouts
## by STEVE "THE DUDE" RUDE

## PRAISE FOR FUTURE QUEST:

"If you crave a dose of classic old-school adventure with some familiar faces and a few high-concept twists thrown in, FUTURE QUEST won't disappoint." **IGN**

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# DISCOVER THE SHOCKING ORIGINS OF SPACE GHOST, BIRDMAN AND MORE!

The stars of the hit series FUTURE QUEST–the reimagined heroes of classic Hanna-Barbera animation–are back!

Join Space Ghost, Jan, Jace and Blip as they venture deep beneath the planet of the Herculoids in search of the secret to re-forming the intergalactic peace-keeping Space Force. But there's a dangerous entity waiting in the dark, and it won't rest until it destroys the last surviving member of the Space Force... Space Ghost! Can Space Ghost and his team of interplanetary adventurers defeat the fearsome villain known as Metallus?

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From the action-packed pages of the hit series FUTURE QUEST, the classic Hanna-Barbera characters take on new dimensions thanks to acclaimed creators **JEFF PARKER** (BATMAN '66), **PHIL HESTER** (WONDER WOMAN), **STEVE RUDE** (*Nexus*) and **ARIEL OLIVETTI** (GREEN LANTERN/SPACE GHOST). Collects FUTURE QUEST PRESENTS #1-3 and #5-7.

**dccomics.com**

# SON OF ULTRON

# "THIS FAN... THIS MONSTER!"